


Planning a Service Learning Course

Incorporating service learning into a course requires thoughtful pre-planning and thorough follow-up. It is important to keep in mind that the service learning activity is not an additional component, but rather an alternate way to teach course concepts. The syllabus is the student's first interaction with the service learning experience. It should clearly explain how the service learning project relates to the coursework. It can be helpful to include an explanation of service learning as an educational methodology and as an integral piece of the process used to prepare students for graduation.

Below are questions to consider when revising or developing a syllabus to include service learning. Your answers to questions with a  icon may serve as text to include in your revised syllabus.

1. What do you hope to achieve/accomplish by including service learning in your course? What do you expect your students to know, be able to do, and/or value?



Include an explanation of service learning on your syllabus.

2. How are the hopes you described in question one tied to your learning goals & objectives for the course?
3. What content areas or course themes might be enhanced through a service experience?



How could you revise your course description to introduce the service component? Be specific and explain how the SL component connects to course goals and objectives and thus student success in your course. List this on your syllabus.

4. What social justice issue would you like students to address? What kind of academic questions will you have students consider while in the community?



What is your service learning meta-question? List this on your syllabus

5. How can you revise or add to your course objectives to integrate service?



Use the "Establishing Academic Learning Objectives" worksheet to help you answer this question and list these on your syllabus.

6. What type of service learning components might fit best with your course? Will it be direct or indirect? Will it be a component of the course or the organizing framework? Will students work individually, in teams, or as an entire class? Would students participate in service throughout the semester or would it be a one-time event?



How might you describe/explain the service learning project on your syllabus?




If a student is legitimately unable to participate in the service learning project, what alternate requirement would you be able to provide?


7. What is an appropriate workload for the course? What adjustments need to be made based on the service learning component (as you described in #6)? Keep in mind the average number of out of class time students are expected to spend per credit hour. Calculate an estimate of time students would




spend completing readings, assignments, and the service learning component for your course and compare to the average.

 If desired, include an explanation of any adjustments you've made in course requirements to offset the hours students are expected/estimated to spend on the service learning component.


8. With what types of agencies would you like students to work? How will you identify, choose, and contact these potential partners?
9. How will you prepare students for working with your community partner and/or their constituents? Will you introduce the partner/community or will you have a representative from the organization introduce their mission, population served, programs etc.?

 Provide guidelines for contacting the community partner (as previously discussed with them). Include as much information as appropriate/needed to introduce the organization and contact to students, as well as any expectations for communication, conduct, professionalism, responsibilities, etc.

10. How will you ensure that both students and community partners are benefitting from the service learning relationship?
11. How could you be strategic in connecting your teaching and research as you develop community partnerships?
12. How will student's service learning work be assessed? What types of assignments or grading of the service learning component could you use in your course (writing, discussion, research project, community product, etc.)? Will community partners be asked to evaluate student performance in the service learning component and will this be a part of students' grades?

 Describe as explicitly as possible how students will be graded (frequency, quality, content, scale/pass-fail, etc.).

13. What kinds of reflection activities could you use? Will reflection be an assignment, part of class participation grade, simply an activity that occurs during class time or something else?

 Include an explanation of the purpose of reflection in service learning as well as how reflection will be handled in your course.

14. How could you assess community and student learning? How could you share this information with others on campus and in the community?
15. How will you wrap up the quarter with your community partner? You may want to consider setting up a debrief meeting to discuss how things went.





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